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## A NEW FEATURE IN THE ARCHEOLOGY OF THE MISSOURI VALLEY IN NORTH DAKOTA

By GEORGE F. WILL

SOME time ago in an article on "Some New Missouri River Valley sites in North Dakota," which appeared in the *Anthropologist* for January-March, 1910 (pp. 58-60), the writer mentioned some mounds on Apple Creek near the Norman Falconer place. Of these mounds a more careful survey has since been made, as also of the hills across the creek to the south. This paper gives the details which were collected.

An accompanying rough map (fig. 91) is intended merely to give an idea of the main features, and the mounds are somewhat exaggerated in size. The locations are approximate as the survey was not made with instruments. The mounds are marked with letters. The irregular line making a point, upon which the mounds are mainly seen, is the line marking the slope where the bench land drops away to the river bottom. Apple Creek is seen flowing close to the edge of the bench on the east.

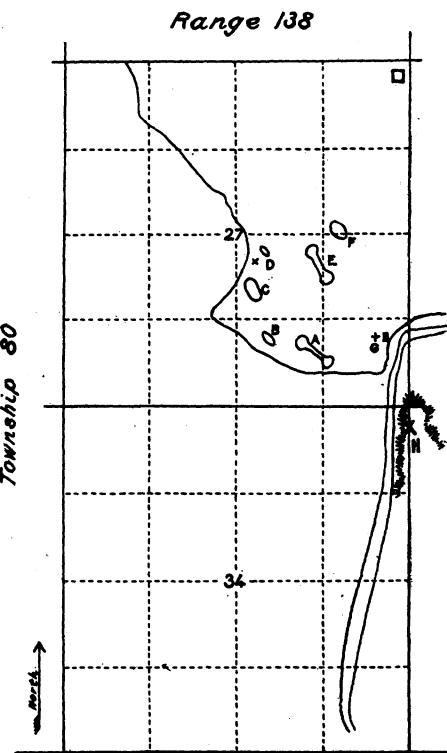


FIG. 91.—Map showing location of mounds on Apple Creek, North Dakota.

These mounds have been known historically for many years. Upon the point where they are located part of General Sibley's command was engaged with the Sioux for several days. Along the edge of the slope can still be distinguished lines of rifle pits which the soldiers dug at that time. Among the soldiers in this fight was the late Mr Brower, long connected with the Minnesota Historical Society. He afterward told Mr Steinbrueck of Mandan, N. D., that he had seen several mounds here at the time of the battle, and that they seemed to be quite different from the mounds found around the Mandan and other village sites in the vicinity. In the top of the mound marked *F* there is a grave in which Mr Angus Falconer states that one of Sibley's soldiers was buried.

The land upon which the mounds are found, with the exception of that part where mounds *A* and *B* are located, has been cultivated for many years. Consequently the mounds are fast being effaced. In the field with the mounds several other things of interest have been found. At the point marked *G* a cache or pocket of chipped flint was found about three years ago. Arrowheads have also been picked up frequently in plowing the field.

Mr Falconer states that for many years no pottery at all was found in the neighborhood. About a year ago, however, several fragments were picked up at a point near mound *D* on the map, close to the edge of the bench. The pottery found consists of three small pieces, all apparently from the same vessel. It is of the type usually found in the region, but of the coarsest and least burnt sort, of considerable thickness and showing no decoration. So far as could be ascertained this is the only pottery ever found hereabouts. This surprising scarcity of pottery seems to differentiate this site from any of the village sites, where pottery always occurs in immense quantities.

Very little excavation has been done on the mounds. The writer removed considerable earth on the east end of mound *B* but found nothing of human workmanship. The earth contained rather more pebbles and small stones than the surrounding soil, otherwise it was the same.

It should be noted that the mounds are of two forms, four being

almost circular, a trifle longer than they are wide. The other two are much longer and narrower, and seem to consist of two small circular mounds connected by a long, narrow bank. The mounds uniformly lie in a northwest to southeast direction, though not pointing exactly alike.

The dimensions of the mounds were taken and will here be set down. Mound *A* is 229 feet long, about 40 feet in diameter at the ends, and 20 feet along the connecting ridge. Mound *B* is 55 feet long and 30 feet wide. Mound *C* is nearly round with a diameter of 92 feet. Mound *D* is also nearly round with a diameter of 20 feet, this being the smallest mound. Mound *E* is by far the largest. The diameter of the round, end mounds is approximately 50 feet, while that of the connecting mound is 30 feet. The total length of this mound is 375 feet. There is a small depression on either side of mound *D* as though earth had been taken out to build the mound. Mound *F* is nearly round with a diameter of 67 feet. The mounds are all rather low, the average height being not more than 3 or 4 feet. It is probable however that before the land was cultivated the height was considerably greater. None of the above measurements could be called absolutely accurate for the reason that it is very difficult to determine absolutely just where the mound joins the surrounding level; they are, however, as nearly accurate as possible.

Across the creek on the hills to the south and southeast there are also several noteworthy features. On the point of a high hill directly overlooking the creek and the mounds, at a spot marked *X* on the map, a number of bones were found, partially uncovered by the action of the weather. They had apparently been interred in a bundle, though this could not be determined certainly. Mr Angus Falconer states that at the same point several human skulls were exhumed some fifteen years ago. The bones found were identified as part of a child's skeleton.

Northeast of the hill where these bones were found and on another high hill not shown on the map, at a distance from it of about half a mile, is another mound. This mound is very low and very indistinctly defined. It lies in a northwest to southeast di-

rection on the flat top of the hill, and far exceeds the other mounds north of the creek in size. Its length is 540 feet and its width about 50 feet. There is no apparent increase in the width at the ends.

These mounds seem to be a new feature in the archeology of the Missouri River region, or at least of that part of it in the vicinity of Bismarck, N. D. They differ widely from the usual village-site mounds, both in the lack of artifacts in the earth of which they are composed and in the general orientation. There are no traces of debris or refuse, nor of house rings, in the vicinity, and, as before stated, pottery is almost entirely absent. Whether they are the product of a different people from the village builders, or merely an unusual and seldom encountered form of the work of the latter is difficult to decide. They are certainly quite as old and perhaps older than the village sites found in the region. A careful and complete excavation of one of the mounds might throw some light on their purpose and uses, and help solve the question as to who built them. Without such an exploration these questions can not be satisfactorily answered.

BISMARCK, N. D.